

1886 STORY

Solitary Vigil of the Duxbury Light Keeper's Wife.

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Near the entrance of the inner harbor of Plymouth, where the channel divides, one part leading to Duxbury and the other to Plymouth, stands the red, round tower of Duxbury light, there is no land visible about it except at low tides, when the keeper can scramble over rough rocks close to the base, the means of entrance being by a long iron ladder hanging from the side. All supplies have to be brought by boat from Plymouth, nearly three miles away. In this tower lives Lightkeeper Gorham, his wife, and son of about 19.

Mr. Gorham was recovering from an attack of pneumonia when the inspector last visited the light, and with a view to hastening recovery the official ordered him ashore, leaving his wife and son in charge. On Oct. 26, Allie, the son, went to town to buy some supplies and was delayed so that when he was ready to start back, the storm then prevailing made the journey unsafe. From Tuesday to Sunday, Oct. 21, Mrs. Gorham was alone in the tower, the heavy billows beating against and the wind howling around it. The thick mist obscured the land, and thus the feeling of companionship derived from seeing even distantly the abodes of others was denied her. Her dory, moored near the tower, in some way broke loose and drifted away. She braved the storm to descend the ladder and lash it securely, that that too might not be torn away by the breakers.

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On one occasion—the wild night that the Pavonia reached Boston after her mishap—Mrs. Gorham was alarmed by hearing footsteps on the rock just below the lantern, 50 feet from the water, and with no approach save through the tower. Backward and forward they paced, now stopping an instant and then continuing their march. How anyone could have gotten there without her knowledge was beyond her comprehension until next morning she discovered the visitors to have been seagulls. Throughout all of her lonely watch, Mrs. Gorham kept the light burning brilliantly, the anxious husband ashore reassured as he from time to time caught glimpses of its beams through rifts in the misty veil. It was a hard place for a woman, but Mrs. Gorham was equal to the emergency.